

restoration account shall be deducted for that purpose, and such sum is authorized to be made available therefor until the expiration of the next succeeding fiscal year, and within 60 days after the close of such fiscal year the Secretary of the Interior shall apportion such part thereof as remains unexpended, if any, on the same basis and in the same manner as is provided under paragraphs (2) and (3).

"(2) The Secretary of the Interior, after making the deduction under paragraph (1), shall make the following apportionment from the amount remaining in the wildlife conservation and restoration account:

"(A) to the District of Columbia and to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, each a sum equal to not more than 1/2 of 1 percent thereof; and

"(B) to Guam, American Samoa, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, each a sum equal to not more than 1/4 of 1 percent thereof.

"(3) The Secretary of the Interior, after making the deduction under paragraph (1) and the apportionment under paragraph (2), shall apportion the remaining amount in the wildlife conservation and restoration account for each year among the States in the following manner:

"(A) 1/3 which is based on the ratio to which the land area of such State bears to the total land area of all such States; and

"(B) 2/3 of which is based on the ratio to which the population of such State bears to the total population of all such States.

The amounts apportioned under this paragraph shall be adjusted equitably so that no such State shall be apportioned a sum which is less than 1/2 of 1 percent of the amount available for apportionment under this paragraph for any fiscal year or more than 5 percent of such amount."

"(d) WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PROGRAMS.—Any State, through its fish and wildlife department, may apply to the Secretary for approval of a wildlife conservation and restoration program or for funds to develop a program, which shall—

"(1) contain provision for vesting in the fish and wildlife department of overall responsibility and accountability for development and implementation of the program; and

"(2) contain provision for development and implementation of—

"(A) wildlife conservation projects which expand and support existing wildlife programs to meet the needs of a diverse array of wildlife species,

"(B) wildlife associated recreation programs, and

"(C) wildlife conservation education projects.

If the Secretary of the Interior finds that an application for such program contains the elements specified in paragraphs (1) and (2), the Secretary shall approve such application and set aside from the apportionment to the State made pursuant to section 4(c) an amount that shall not exceed 90 percent of the estimated cost of developing and implementing segments of the program for the first 5 fiscal years following enactment of this subsection and not to exceed 75 percent thereafter. Not more than 10 percent of the amounts apportioned to each State from this subaccount for the State's wildlife conservation and restoration program may be used for law enforcement. Following approval, the Secretary may make payments on a project that is a segment of the State's wildlife conservation and restoration program as the project progresses but such payments, including previous payments on the project, if any, shall not be more than the United States pro rata share of such project. The

Secretary, under such regulations as he may prescribe, may advance funds representing the United States pro rata share of a project that is a segment of a wildlife conservation and restoration program, including funds to develop such program. For purposes of this subsection, the term 'State' shall include the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

(b) FACA.—Coordination with State fish and wildlife department personnel or with personnel of other State agencies pursuant to the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act or the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act shall not be subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.). Except for the preceding sentence, the provisions of this title relate solely to wildlife conservation and restoration programs as defined in this title and shall not be construed to affect the provisions of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act relating to wildlife restoration projects or the provisions of the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act relating to fish restoration and management projects.

#### SEC. 307. LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC RELATIONS.

The third sentence of subsection (a) of section 8 of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 669g) is amended by inserting before the period at the end thereof: ", except that funds available from this subaccount for a State wildlife conservation and restoration program may be used for law enforcement and public relations".

#### SEC. 308. PROHIBITION AGAINST DIVERSION.

No designated State agency shall be eligible to receive matching funds under this Act if sources of revenue available to it on January 1, 1998, for conservation of wildlife are diverted for any purpose other than the administration of the designated State agency, it being the intention of Congress that funds available to States under this Act be added to revenues from existing State sources and not serve as a substitute for revenues from such sources. Such revenues shall include interest, dividends, or other income earned on the foregoing.

#### LONG-TERM CARE PATIENT PROTECTION ACT OF 1998—S. 2570

The text of the bill (S. 2570), introduced on October 7, 1998, is as follows:

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SEC. 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM TO PREVENT ABUSE OF NURSING FACILITY RESIDENTS.

(a) NURSING FACILITY AND SKILLED NURSING FACILITY REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) MEDICAID PROGRAM.—Section 1919(b), as amended by section 2(a), is amended by adding after paragraph (8) the following new paragraph:

"(9) SCREENING OF NURSING FACILITY WORKERS.—

"(A) BACKGROUND CHECKS ON APPLICANTS.—Subject to subparagraph (B)(ii), before hiring an individual, a nursing facility shall—

"(i) give the individual written notice that the facility is required to perform background checks with respect to applicants;

"(ii) require, as a condition of employment, that such individual—

"(I) provide a written statement disclosing any conviction for a relevant crime or finding of patient or resident abuse;

"(II) provide a statement signed by the individual authorizing the facility to request the search and exchange of criminal records;

"(III) provide in person a copy of the individual's fingerprints; and

"(IV) provide any other identification information the Secretary may specify in regulation;

"(iii) initiate a check of the registry under section 1128F in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary to determine whether such registry contains any disqualifying information with respect to such individual; and

"(iv) if such registry does not contain any such disqualifying information—

"(I) request that the State initiate a State and national criminal background check on such individual in accordance with the provisions of subsection (e)(9); and

"(II) furnish to the State the information described in subclauses (II) through (IV) of clause (ii) not more than 7 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays under section 6103(a) of title 5, United States Code) after completion of the check against the registry initiated under clause (iii).

"(B) PROHIBITION ON HIRING OF ABUSIVE WORKERS.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—A nursing facility may not knowingly employ any individual who has any conviction for a relevant crime or with respect to whom a finding of patient or resident abuse has been made.

"(ii) PROBATIONARY EMPLOYMENT.—After complying with the requirements of clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of subparagraph (A), a nursing facility may provide for a probationary period of employment (not to exceed 90 days) for an individual pending completion of the check against the registry described under subparagraph (A)(iii) and the background check described under subparagraph (A)(iv). Such facility shall maintain supervision of the individual during the individual's probationary period of employment.

"(C) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—A nursing facility shall report to the State any instance in which the facility determines that an individual has committed an act of resident neglect or abuse or misappropriation of resident property in the course of employment by the facility.

"(D) USE OF INFORMATION.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—A nursing facility that obtains information about an individual pursuant to clauses (iii) and (iv) of subparagraph (A) may use such information only for the purpose of determining the suitability of the individual for employment.

"(ii) IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY.—A nursing facility that, in denying employment for an applicant, reasonably relies upon information about an individual provided by the State pursuant to subsection (e)(9) shall not be liable in any action brought by the individual based on the employment determination resulting from the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the information.

"(iii) CRIMINAL PENALTY.—Whoever knowingly violates the provisions of subparagraph (D)(i) shall be fined in accordance with title 18, United States Code, imprisoned for not more than 2 years, or both.

"(E) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this paragraph—

"(i) the term 'conviction for a relevant crime' means any State or Federal criminal conviction for—

"(I) any offense described in paragraphs (1) through (4) of section 1128(a); and

"(II) such other types of offenses as the Secretary may specify in regulations;

"(ii) the term 'finding of patient or resident abuse' means any substantiated finding by a State agency under subsection (g)(1)(C) or a Federal agency that an individual has committed—

"(I) an act of patient or resident abuse or neglect or a misappropriation of patient or resident property; or

"(II) such other types of acts as the Secretary may specify in regulations; and

"(iii) the term 'disqualifying information' means information about a conviction for a relevant crime or a finding of patient or resident abuse."

(2) MEDICARE PROGRAM.—Section 1819(b), as amended by section 2(b), is amended by adding after paragraph (8) the following new paragraph:

"(9) SCREENING OF NURSING FACILITY WORKERS.—

"(A) BACKGROUND CHECKS ON APPLICANTS.—Subject to subparagraph (B)(ii), before hiring an individual, a skilled nursing facility shall—

"(i) give the individual written notice that the facility is required to perform background checks with respect to applicants;

"(ii) require, as a condition of employment, that such individual—

"(I) provide a written statement disclosing any conviction for a relevant crime or finding of patient or resident abuse;

"(II) provide a statement signed by the individual authorizing the facility to request the search and exchange of criminal records;

"(III) provide in person a copy of the individual's fingerprints; and

"(IV) provide any other identification information the Secretary may specify in regulation;

"(iii) initiate a check of the registry under section 1128F in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary to determine whether such registry contains any disqualifying information with respect to such individual; and

"(iv) if such registry does not contain any such disqualifying information—

"(I) request that the State initiate a State and national criminal background check on such individual in accordance with the provisions of subsection (e)(7); and

"(II) furnish to the State the information described in subclauses (II) through (IV) of clause (ii) not more than 7 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays under section 6103(a) of title 5, United States Code) after completion of the check against the registry initiated under clause (iii).

"(B) PROHIBITION ON HIRING OF ABUSIVE WORKERS.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—A skilled nursing facility may not knowingly employ any individual who has any conviction for a relevant crime or with respect to whom a finding of patient or resident abuse has been made.

"(ii) PROBATIONARY EMPLOYMENT.—After complying with the requirements of clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) of subparagraph (A), a skilled nursing facility may provide for a probationary period of employment (not to exceed 90 days) for an individual pending completion of the check against the registry described under subparagraph (A)(iii) and the background check described under subparagraph (A)(iv). Such facility shall maintain supervision of the individual during the individual's probationary period of employment.

"(C) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—A skilled nursing facility shall report to the State any instance in which the facility determines that an individual has committed an act of resident neglect or abuse or misappropriation of resident property in the course of employment by the facility.

"(D) USE OF INFORMATION.—

"(i) IN GENERAL.—A skilled nursing facility that obtains information about an individual pursuant to clauses (iii) and (iv) of subparagraph (A) may use such information only for the purpose of determining the suitability of the individual for employment.

"(ii) IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY.—A skilled nursing facility that, in denying employment for an applicant, reasonably relies

upon information about an individual provided by the State pursuant to subsection (e)(9) shall not be liable in any action brought by the individual based on the employment determination resulting from the incompleteness or inaccuracy of the information.

"(iii) CRIMINAL PENALTY.—Whoever knowingly violates the provisions of subparagraph (D)(i) shall be fined in accordance with title 18, United States Code, imprisoned for not more than 2 years, or both.

"(E) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this paragraph—

"(i) the term 'conviction for a relevant crime' means any State or Federal criminal conviction for—

"(I) any offense described in paragraphs (1) through (4) of section 1128(a); and

"(II) such other types of offenses as the Secretary may specify in regulations;

"(ii) the term 'finding of patient or resident abuse' means any substantiated finding by a State agency under subsection (g)(1)(C) or a Federal agency that an individual has committed—

"(I) an act of patient or resident abuse or neglect or a misappropriation of patient or resident property; or

"(II) such other types of acts as the Secretary may specify in regulations; and

"(iii) the term 'disqualifying information' means information about a conviction for a relevant crime or a finding of patient or resident abuse."

"(b) STATE REQUIREMENTS.—

"(1) MEDICAID PROGRAMS.—

"(A) EXPANSION OF STATE REGISTRY TO COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT NURSING FACILITY EMPLOYEES OTHER THAN NURSE AIDES.—Section 1919, as amended by section 2(a), is amended—

"(i) in subsection (e)(2)—

"(I) in the paragraph heading, by striking "NURSE AIDE REGISTRY" and inserting "NURSING FACILITY EMPLOYEE REGISTRY";

"(II) in subparagraph (A)—

"(aa) by striking "By not later than January 1, 1989, the" and inserting "The";

"(bb) by striking "a registry of all individuals" and inserting "a registry of (I) all individuals"; and

"(cc) by inserting before the period " and (II) all other nursing facility employees with respect to whom the State has made a finding described in subparagraph (B)";

"(III) in subparagraph (B), by striking "involving an individual listed in the registry" and inserting "involving a nursing facility employee"; and

"(IV) in subparagraph (C), by striking "nurse aide" and inserting "nursing facility employee or applicant for employment"; and

"(ii) in subsection (g)(1)—

"(I) in subparagraph (C)—

"(aa) in the first sentence, by striking "nurse aide" and inserting "nursing facility employee"; and

"(bb) in the third sentence, by striking "nurse aide" each place it appears and inserting "nursing facility employee"; and

"(II) in subparagraph (D), by striking "nurse aide" each place it appears and inserting "nursing facility employee".

"(B) STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENT TO CONDUCT BACKGROUND CHECKS.—Section 1919(e), as amended by section 2(a), is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(9) STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS ON NURSING FACILITY EMPLOYEES.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon receipt of a request by a nursing facility pursuant to subsection (b)(9) that is accompanied by the information described in subclauses (II) through (IV) of subsection (b)(9)(A)(ii), a State, after checking appropriate State

records and finding no disqualifying information (as defined in subsection (b)(9)(E)), shall submit such request and information to the Attorney General and shall request the Attorney General to conduct a search and exchange of records with respect to the individual as described in subparagraph (B).

"(B) SEARCH AND EXCHANGE OF RECORDS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—Upon receipt of a submission pursuant to subparagraph (A), the Attorney General shall direct a search of the records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for any criminal history records corresponding to the fingerprints or other positive identification information submitted. The Attorney General shall provide any corresponding information resulting from the search to the State.

"(C) STATE REPORTING OF INFORMATION TO NURSING FACILITY.—Upon receipt of the information provided by the Attorney General pursuant to subparagraph (B), the State shall—

"(i) review the information to determine whether the individual has any conviction for a relevant crime (as defined in subsection (b)(9)(E)); and

"(iii) report to the nursing facility the results of such review.

"(D) FEES FOR PERFORMANCE OF CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.—

"(i) AUTHORITY TO CHARGE FEES.—

"(I) ATTORNEY GENERAL.—The Attorney General may charge a fee to any State requesting a search and exchange of records pursuant to this paragraph and subsection (b)(9) for conducting the search and providing the records. The amount of such fee shall not exceed the lesser of the actual cost of such activities or \$50. Such fees shall be available to the Attorney General, or, in the Attorney General's discretion, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, until expended.

"(II) STATE.—A State may charge a nursing facility a fee for initiating the criminal background check under this paragraph and subsection (b)(9), including fees charged by the Attorney General, and for performing the review and report required by subparagraph (C). The amount of such fee shall not exceed the actual cost of such activities.

"(ii) TREATMENT OF FEES FOR PURPOSES OF COST REPORTS.—An entity may not include a fee assessed pursuant to this subparagraph as an allowable item on a cost report under this title or title XVIII.

"(iii) PROHIBITION ON CHARGING APPLICANTS OR EMPLOYEES.—An entity may not impose on an applicant for employment or an employee any charges relating to the performance of a background check under this paragraph.

"(E) REGULATIONS.—In addition to the Secretary's authority to promulgate regulations under this title, the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary, may promulgate such regulations as are necessary to carry out the Attorney General's responsibilities under this paragraph and subsection (b)(9), including regulations regarding the security, confidentiality, accuracy, use, destruction, and dissemination of information, audits and recordkeeping and the imposition of fees.

"(F) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the "Long-Term Care Patient Protection Act of 1998", the Attorney General shall submit a report to Congress on the number of requests for searches and exchanges of records made under this section and the disposition of such requests."

(2) MEDICARE PROGRAM.—

(A) EXPANSION OF STATE REGISTRY TO COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT SKILLED NURSING FACILITY EMPLOYEES OTHER THAN NURSE AIDES.—Section 1819, as amended by section 2(b), is amended—

(i) in subsection (e)(2)—

(I) in the paragraph heading, by striking "NURSE AIDE REGISTRY" and inserting "SKILLED NURSING CARE EMPLOYEE REGISTRY";

(II) in subparagraph (A)—

(aa) by striking "By not later than January 1, 1989, the" and inserting "The";

(bb) by striking "a registry of all individuals" and inserting "a registry of (I) all individuals"; and

(cc) by inserting before the period " , and (II) all other skilled nursing facility employees with respect to whom the State has made a finding described in subparagraph (B)";

(III) in subparagraph (B), by striking "involving an individual listed in the registry" and inserting "involving a skilled nursing facility employee"; and

(IV) in subparagraph (C), by striking "nurse aide" and inserting "skilled nursing facility employee or applicant for employment"; and

(i) in subsection (g)(1)—

(I) in subparagraph (C)—

(aa) in the first sentence, by striking "nurse aide" and inserting "skilled nursing facility employee"; and

(bb) in the third sentence, by striking "nurse aide" each place it appears and inserting "skilled nursing facility employee"; and

(II) in subparagraph (D), by striking "nurse aide" each place it appears and inserting "skilled nursing facility employee".

(B) STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENT TO CONDUCT BACKGROUND CHECKS.—Section 1819(e), as amended by section 2(b), is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(7) STATE AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS ON SKILLED NURSING FACILITY EMPLOYEES.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—Upon receipt of a request by a skilled nursing facility pursuant to subsection (b)(9) that is accompanied by the information described in subclauses (II) through (IV) of subsection (b)(9)(A)(ii), a State, after checking appropriate State records and finding no disqualifying information (as defined in subsection (b)(9)(E)), shall submit such request and information to the Attorney General and shall request the Attorney General to conduct a search and exchange of records with respect to the individual as described in subparagraph (B).

"(B) SEARCH AND EXCHANGE OF RECORDS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—Upon receipt of a submission pursuant to subparagraph (A), the Attorney General shall direct a search of the records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for any criminal history records corresponding to the fingerprints or other positive identification information submitted. The Attorney General shall provide any corresponding information resulting from the search to the State.

"(C) STATE REPORTING OF INFORMATION TO NURSING FACILITY.—Upon receipt of the information provided by the Attorney General pursuant to subparagraph (B), the State shall—

"(i) review the information to determine whether the individual has any conviction for a relevant crime (as defined in subsection (b)(9)(E)); and

"(ii) report to the skilled nursing facility the results of such review.

"(D) FEES FOR PERFORMANCE OF CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.—

"(i) AUTHORITY TO CHARGE FEES.—

"(I) ATTORNEY GENERAL.—The Attorney General may charge a fee to any State requesting a search and exchange of records pursuant to this paragraph and subsection (b)(9) for conducting the search and providing the records. The amount of such fee shall not exceed the lesser of the actual cost of

such activities or \$50. Such fees shall be available to the Attorney General, or, in the Attorney General's discretion, to the Federal Bureau of Investigation until expended.

"(II) STATE.—A State may charge a skilled nursing facility a fee for initiating the criminal background check under this paragraph and subsection (b)(9), including fees charged by the Attorney General, and for performing the review and report required by subparagraph (C). The amount of such fee shall not exceed the actual cost of such activities.

"(ii) TREATMENT OF FEES FOR PURPOSES OF COST REPORTS.—An entity may not include a fee assessed pursuant to this subparagraph as an allowable item on a cost report under this title or title XIX.

"(iii) PROHIBITION ON CHARGING APPLICANTS OR EMPLOYEES.—An entity may not impose on an applicant for employment or an employee any charges relating to the performance of a background check under this paragraph.

"(E) REGULATIONS.—In addition to the Secretary's authority to promulgate regulations under this title, the Attorney General, consultation with the Secretary, may promulgate such regulations as are necessary to carry out the Attorney General's responsibilities under this paragraph and subsection (b)(9), including regulations regarding the Security confidentiality, accuracy, use, destruction, and dissemination of information, audits and recordkeeping, and the imposition of fees.

"(F) REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the "Long-Term Care Patient Protection Act of 1998", the Attorney General shall submit a report to Congress on the number of requests for searches and exchanges of records made under this section and the disposition of such requests."

"(c) ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL REGISTRY OF ABUSIVE NURSING FACILITY WORKERS.—Title XI of the Social Security Act is amended by adding after section 1128E the following new section:

#### "NATIONAL REGISTRY OF ABUSIVE NURSING FACILITY WORKERS

"SEC. 1128F. (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall establish a national data collection program for the reporting of information described in subsection (b), with access as set forth in subsection (c), and shall maintain a database of the information collected under the section.

"(b) REPORTING OF INFORMATION.—Each State shall report the information collected pursuant to sections 1819(e)(2)(B) and 1919(e)(2)(B) in such form and manner as the Secretary may prescribe by regulation.

"(c) ACCESS TO REPORTED INFORMATION.—

"(1) AVAILABILITY.—The information in the database maintained under this section shall be available, pursuant to producers maintained under this section, to—

"(A) Federal and State government agencies;

"(B) nursing facilities participating in the program under title XIX and skilled nursing facilities participating in a program under title XVIII; and

"(C) such other persons as the Secretary may specify by regulations,

but only for the purpose of determining the suitability for employment in a nursing facility or skilled nursing facility.

"(2) INFORMATION.—The information in the database shall be exempt from disclosure under 5 U.S.C. 552.

"(3) FEES FOR DISCLOSURE.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may establish or approve reasonable fees for the disclosure of information in such data base. The amount of such a fee shall be sufficient

to recover the full costs of operating the database. Such fees shall be available to the Secretary or, in the Secretary's discretion, to the agency designated under this section to cover such costs.

"(B) AVAILABILITY OF FEES.—Fees collected pursuant to this subsection shall remain available until expended, in the amounts provided in appropriation acts, for necessary expenses related to the purposes for which the fees were assessed.

"(C) TREATMENT OF FEES FOR PURPOSES OF COST REPORTS.—An entity may not include a fee assessed pursuant to this subsection as an allowable item on a cost report under this title or title XIX.

"(D) PROHIBITION ON CHARGING APPLICANTS OR EMPLOYEES.—An entity may not impose on an applicant for employment or an employee any charges relating to the registry established and maintained under this section."

#### SEC. 2. EFFECTIVE DATA.

The provisions of and amendments made by the Act shall be effective on and after the date of enactment, without regard to whether implementing regulations are in effect.

#### CARL D. PERKINS VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENTS—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I submit a report of the committee of conference on the bill (H.R. 1853) to amend the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The report will be stated.

The clerk read as follows:

The committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1853), have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of October 8, 1998.)

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I will make a few comments on the vocational education bill at this time.

Today we are considering the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.

This is one of the most important proposals we will consider in the 105th Congress. In July, we passed the Workforce Investment Act. The reauthorization of vocational education is an important partner to the Workforce Investment Act.

There are presently between 200,000 and 300,000 unfilled positions in the technology field. The reason for the difficulty in filling these positions is not because of low unemployment numbers, but because of the lack of skilled workers. Many of these jobs do not require four years and plus of post-secondary education. They do require an excellent vocational education system and the ability to pursue further technical education following high school education.